

Much heat and No light

As fine, more like spring weather keeps struggling to set in, we stick to Burgos news-making events and stories. Plenty of them today, I can assure you. First we'll go to our newsdesk with Pridya and Victoria for our Much Heat and No Light.

This is a section which examines controversies, overstatements, misunderstandings which are blown out of proportion and into scandals or mere squabbles between political parties. It is our commitment to take the heat away and shed some light.

Budget City Council Meeting

Fuming at the never-ending road works, fighting to keep the dust out of your store, or rather overexcited by the facelift given to our city, now looking shiny and bright. But at what cost? Many people wonder. The finance committee was convened by Angel Ibañez, councillor for Finance. Nobody was surprised because it was a long-awaited meeting. What did he have to say for himself, Pridya?

He wanted to announce to the opposition parties that the Budget 2006 has been signed off. This comes very soon after the end of the financial year, so he appears to be trumpeting success, but is he?

There were €57 million spent which is record public spending, with a 100% increase on 2003.

Which, by the way, is the time when the previous term was coming to an end. Now, on top of that there is this €71 remaining to be spent. They will be used for urban renewal programs such as further pedestrianization, which as you have probably realized keeps spreading outwardly when the inner city centre, and to redevelop and upgrade some areas some suburbs. I don't know. Are you listener happy with the way money has been spent? Has this city changed for the better? What do you think should happen next? Any suggestions. Please let us know. E-mails us at letters@burgostoday, all in one word, .com. previous term was coming to an end.

Military Recreational Facilities

La Deportiva, the Military Recreational facilities and Sports Grounds is coming again under fire. Do we know why?

Civilian Burgaleses are becoming increasingly concerned they will not be able to use the services of La Deportiva for much longer. Victoria is a civilian member of La Deportiva. Victoria, what triggered these fears?

Well..... We received a newsletter early in 2007. It says non-military members will see, actually we are already seeing, their fees rise by almost 25%. We will also be left without the free passes for our friends. We feel the future is uncertain.

A local political party has stepped in. Jesus Ojeda, an IU councillor, will be proposing a motion at the monthly council meeting. What is he seeking?

He wants an explicit commitment from the Ministry of Defence that the grounds will continue to provide the services they have been, and that they will not be sold to speculators thirsty for residential land.

He insists that the central government should intervene to dispel these fears. He says that the grounds should remain a space to be enjoyed by many Burgaleses. He will suggest that if the Ministry gives up the management of the Sports Grounds, Burgos City Council should step in and take over.

A final word from Victoria, as a civilian member.

As far as I'm concerned I don't mind who runs it, as long as we can still use it. It would be a pity to get rid of these facilities for the sake of more building sites when we have so many already.

Thank you Victoria for your point of view.

What's in the papers

Competition-winning poster

We already have the competition-winning poster which will advertise San Pedro and San Pablo Festival 2007. The lucky and skilful designer has a name, Alvaro Laura, and his poster has a title, *Flying among giants*. It blends two significant elements ever-present in Burgos Festivalsthat: fireworks displays and those cardboard giant models nicknamed *gigantones*.

Safety on Roads 2007

The Regional Department of Family and Equal Opportunities has launched the campaign called Safety on Roads 2007. Within this campaign free course on safe driving for youngsters are being offered. It seems to target some of them, those who have obtained their driving license after June 1, 2006. It aims at raising awareness about the need to drive responsibly and compliance with medical standards and about how to deal with risks and difficulties that may arise. The courses are subject to availability of 30 places. There will be four-period courses and morning and evening lessons, theory and practical lessons. Enrolments can be made at www.conduceconsentidojcy.com. I'll say that again, www.conduceconsentidojcy.com. Those applicants chosen should produce on enrolling their valid driving license.

Completion of the Northern Inner Relief Road

The Northern Inner Relief Road has been opened to traffic once the section named after the late Burgos mayor Valentín Niño has been completed. It is dual-carriage way that will connect Villalonquejar industrial estate and the Gamonal area averaging 5,000 cars a day since April 11.

e-Mails

Here is a nice compliment for all those behind this on-line news magazine.

“

Hi, I must compliment you all on the production values on your show; it's very clear to know what you're talking about. I wish they did stuff like that in the classes I went to in the Instituto Cervantes.”

Well, Maybe those heading the Instituto Cervantes might act upon that hint of yours. As far as we are concerned we'll keep and try to inform Burgaleses the best we can.

Here is one on the disgraceful, I should agree, spectacle that we can witness at Burgos University Campus in Hospital del Rey.

“

There are plenty of stories being chronicled in Burgos these days amid politicians' confrontations ahead of the coming local elections. No I won't make comments on their electoral pledges and promises because I am aware of the programme's unequivocal commitment to political independence and impartiality. However, I must say, at the risk of someone taking issue with this, that some of the stories today may not be music to our ears, well they were not to mine. Take the harsh and unprovoked abuse that Bishop Rouco Varela had to put up with on Burgos University Campus. Utterly embarrassing and revolting. Burgos University made the headlines and news bulletins in major TV stations led with the story. Whatever the reason, the motivation or the circumstances that triggered it off, that brutal spectacle of intolerance did a disfavour to Burgos as a city.”

Harsh but true.

We are all quite aware of the proliferation of articles and columns in papers, educational journals, educationists' essays, advocating and objecting to this and that policy regarding anti-social behaviour and specifically bullying at schools. This e-mail seems to give a simple solution to a problem frequently portrayed as challenging or unmanageable.

“

I want to get a gun and kill you." I still remember the day last year when a student said that to me. I'm not sure what shocked me more: the fact that he didn't know me or the coldness in his eyes.

Another day after that incident, I was walking through the halls of the Primary school where I teach, you heard that primary school, somewhere in Burgos, when I heard a door slam as a boy stormed out of class. As I followed him down the empty hall, I quickly thought about the best way to

approach him. After three years at this inner-city school, I had learned to gauge the danger levels.

As I wondered where all of that rage came from, I approached him quietly and with some coaxing, he agreed to sit down. His anger dissolved into tears. These two examples reinforce my belief that anger is the unofficial mascot at my school. I am determined to do my part to transform the school's culture of cruelty into a culture of kindness and true learning, but it hasn't been easy. Students have rebuffed many of my efforts – and even tested my faith in humanity. The acts of grace I've glimpsed, however, give me hope that the struggle against cruelty is well worth waging.

Well, this is most uplifting and commendable. I really hope you succeed.

The Military Hospital

Burgos City council laments that the Military Hospital, owned by the Junta, is being underused.

So, they advocate turning it into a specialist centre for brain injuries and neurological disorders. One that would benefit all of Northern Spain.

The idea is based on the Gutmann Institute in Barcelona. This Institute provides surgical services as well as counselling on the implications of illness and disease. This counselling service targets patients as well as their families. However, this is still just a proposal. No concrete steps have been taken. But, it has one thing in its favour that most projects do not.... money. A very common stumbling block for projects

The project is likely to have backing from the Cofradia de La Concepcion. They may contribute a massive 12 million euros to the project. The money will be generated by the sale of the old, disused Hospital de la Concepcion. The rest would come from health insurance companies and other private firms. Which have pledged some amounts.

Having realized they are not pressed for money, council officials have turned to the regional government, which has the final say.

Javier Arias, councillor for Public Health, believes the centre should not be run by the government. Instead, he prefers it to be run by a foundation which includes both public and private bodies.

This raises many questions which remain unanswered. HOW will the centre be run? WHO will run it? And WHO will be able to use it?

But WHAT it will be used FOR, has been answered. Burgos City Council is aiming really high and as part of the ambitious project that it wants to embark on, they want the hospital to house a centre of research and treatment of spine related conditions, brain injuries and all neurological disorders.

It would be quite a victory for Burgos, whose residents feel that they often lose the initiative to other large cities in the region.